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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 000976

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SUBJECT: EU HEIGHTENS ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE PROCESS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

REF: A. MANILA 721 (EAP DAS HIGHLIGHTS U.S. SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY)
[1](#)B. MANILA 455 (AMBASSADOR URGES MILF CHIEF TO EMBRACE PEACE)
[1](#)C. MANILA 238 (PRESIDENT ARROYO REVISES MILF PEACE PROPOSAL)
[1](#)D. 07 MANILA 2198 (EU EXAMINES ASSISTANCE AGAINST UNLAWFUL KILLINGS)

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Paul W. Jones, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The April 14 visit of ten European Union (EU) ambassadors to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Central Mindanao underscored the EU's interest in the peace process. At the same time, recent EU assistance to improve governance, particularly in resolving cases of extrajudicial killings and fighting corruption, tracks closely with U.S. efforts on these critical issues. We encourage the EU's involvement on both issues. While the EU's political impact and level of resources is small compared the U.S., we believe the EU can contribute more and we work with EU countries toward that end. END SUMMARY.

EU MAKES STRONGER PUSH FOR PEACE

[1](#)2. (C) Ten ambassadors from the European Union traveled April 14 to Cotabato City for meetings with Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar, Cotabato City Mayor (and new Moro National Liberation Front Chairman) Muslimin Sema, and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) officials. In addition to the EU Ambassador to the Philippines Alistair MacDonald, the delegation included the ambassadors to the Philippines from Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Prior to the ambassadors' trip, UK Ambassador Peter Beckingham, a key EU voice in the Philippines, privately told Ambassador Kenney that he hoped the meetings would allow for greater EU engagement in the peace process.

[1](#)3. (C) The UK Ambassador voiced the hope that the senior-level visit would signal to both the government and the MILF the seriousness of the international community's desire for peace in Mindanao -- just as U.S., EU, and UN pressure on extrajudicial killings seems to have had a positive impact. Ambassador Kenney encouraged him to use the opportunity to urge the MILF to cooperate more fully with the Philippine government and to cease giving safehaven to suspected terrorists, which he readily agreed would be useful points to drive home. The level at which the EU delegation was received was disappointing, however. Neither the Chairman of the MILF nor the Regional Governor appeared as

promised, the UK Ambassador told Charge after the visit.

¶4. (C) During the April 14 meeting with MILF Vice Chairman Jaafar and other MILF leaders, the EU ambassadors followed through on emphasizing the importance of the MILF not providing safe haven for terrorists in territory under MILF control. The EU ambassadors also urged the MILF to cooperate more fully with the Philippine government on a peace agreement and, as a signal of the EU's seriousness, French Ambassador Gerard Chesnel reiterated the EU's pledge of assistance (12 million Euros) for conflict-affected areas once a final peace agreement is signed.

¶5. (C) The MILF Vice Chairman told the ambassadors that although there was agreement on territorial and natural resource issues, problems remained with the governance aspects of an agreement. He also expressed concern that administration offers to engage independent legal counsel were merely a stalling tactic. The MILF Vice Chairman described division within MILF ranks between those committed to the peace process and some who have lost confidence in achieving a comprehensive and permanent agreement. He feared that the Philippine Congress could further water down the administration's positions on governance as well.

¶6. (C) Upon his return to Manila, UK Ambassador Beckingham described to Charge his impressions of the visit and the EU ambassadors' concerns that the peace talks may be stalled. The UK Ambassador was invited to an additional meeting with two of the primary MILF peace negotiators, Mohagher Iqbal and Datu Michael Mastura, who underscored their fears that Malaysia might pull out of the International Monitoring Team absent further progress in the negotiations. Iqbal and Mastura also asked the UK Ambassador for advice on reaching

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out to the key players in the peace process in Northern Ireland. The UK Ambassador was unsure whether involving those from the Northern Ireland peace process at this stage of the negotiation would be an inspiration or a distraction.

INTENSIFYING PRESSURE ON EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

¶7. (SBU) In addition to increased engagement in the peace process, the EU is also strengthening its human rights and rule of law assistance to the Philippines. The EU conducted a Needs Assessment Mission in June 2007 to identify specific areas where the EU could support Philippine efforts to combat extrajudicial killings (ref D). As a result of that assessment, EU Ambassador Alistair MacDonald recently announced an 18-month assistance project to strengthen human rights protections and to combat extrajudicial killings. The project, called the EU Justice Assistance Mission (EUJAM), is scheduled to begin in September. According to the EU Ambassador, EUJAM will focus on three areas: technical assistance to strengthen the criminal justice system, including forensic and investigative capabilities, as well as prosecutorial functions; assistance and support to human rights civil society groups, including independent government bodies such as the Commission on Human Rights and the Office of the Ombudsman; and human rights awareness training for police and military officers.

¶8. (SBU) The EU will host a stakeholders' meeting in May to seek input and agreement on the specific activities of EUJAM, before seeking the final approval on the project from Brussels. A decision on the financial allocation for EUJAM will not be made until that approval, but the EU Ambassador believes two million Euros would likely support the project. The UK is similarly focusing additional assistance on human rights. In late 2007, the UK declared the Philippines a priority country in the Human Rights Programme of the UK's Global Opportunities Fund, but specific projects will not be selected until late 2008.

JOINING THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

¶9. (U) The EU also delivered a strong message on corruption and rule of law at the 4th annual Philippine Development Forum. The conference brought together stakeholders in the country's development agenda to facilitate substantive policy dialogue. USAID called for continued efforts to address corruption, rule of law (including extrajudicial killings), adequacy of health and educational services, and natural resources management. EU representatives emphasized the need to strengthen social services targeted at the poor and to improve efforts combating graft in public procurement. French Ambassador Chesnel, who delivered the EU statement, told the press that "if there is widespread corruption, it doesn't give the different areas (of the Philippines) the chance to develop further," and that efforts to combat corruption needed to be stepped up.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) We have encouraged the EU to take practical steps on key issues and complement U.S. objectives in the Philippines. The EU delegation's visit to the MILF leadership parallels recent visits by the Ambassador and DCM and demonstrates to the Philippine government and public that an increasingly broad international community supports peace, even if the EU visit did not garner widespread political or public attention. While ostensibly a "fact-finding" mission, the EU delegation's size and development-assistance offers signal an increased willingness to encourage all sides to agree to a peace plan. We will continue to encourage the EU to use its law enforcement assistance on high impact projects that complement USG programs.

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